

property used by teachers and students, was not an issue. The concept of Tony's piece might be interesting, but destroying a projector for this piece seemed to ignore all the ideas that could have been engendered by the pedagogical use of that projector.

**Peer Bode:** I remember a performance by Nam June Paik at the Watters, the Binghamton University Music Department theater, with its grand piano and antique harpsichord. Right before the performance began, Sherry Miller told me that Ralph had lent Nam June his toy piano for the performance and had told him, "Don't fuck it up!"

Nam June had a reputation for provocations in his Danger Music performances. He had unexpectedly cut off John Cage's tie, and Cage was apparently a bit afraid of him. At the Binghamton performance one of Nam June's first pieces involved his standing on the edge of the stage, holding a violin by the end of its neck, his arms extended. After holding it still for what seemed a long time, holding it, holding it, Nam June suddenly smashed the violin, which exploded in what seemed like slow motion. The symbolic violence of the gesture was clear; and the time-bending perceptual aspect was surprising, amazing, even shamanistic. After this, the audience—faculty from various university departments and students—was no longer relaxed. There was excitement, adrenaline, anger in the room. What a setup for what took place next!

Nam June proceeded to have the precious harpsichord placed on top of the grand piano. And on top of the harpsichord he placed the toy piano. He proceeded to play a single note on the grand piano, then the same note on the harpsichord, then on the toy piano. If I'm not mistaken, that was when members of the music faculty got up and left the theater.

The music Nam June played at this point in the performance was beautiful. One note at a time, one instrument at a time. But once some audience relaxation had set in, Nam June again broke the calm. He proceeded to methodically tear each key off the toy piano as he played it. This is when Ralph and Sherry left the theater. There was shock and concern in the air: Was Nam June going to break the Music Department's beloved harpsichord?

He did not. He did not. Nevertheless, the provocations at that performance were such that the Music Department faculty did not speak to the Cinema Department faculty for years—well, this may or may not have been true, but that was what we students told each other later.

At the end of the Nam June Paik performance, I remember Dan Barnett being quite agitated. He told me he felt this was very much an old-hat avant-garde performance. At the time I thought he might have

been right; it surely was a different set of strategies than we were practicing. The performance was, however, powerful and memorable.

I wonder what Dan would have thought of the Hermann Nitsch performance that had happened two years earlier—during my second week of undergraduate studies at Binghamton!

*Alan Berliner:* By my senior year, I was a teaching assistant for both Larry and Ken. In fact, when Ken became ill early in the semester, the department asked me to teach the course. They even paid me! That's when I found out how much I enjoy teaching.

At some point along the way, Larry and Ken sent me to New York City to make arrangements with Harry Smith, who wanted to donate a print of one of his films to the department to fulfill a requirement of a recent CAPS (Creative Artists Public Service) grant he'd received. Harry asked me to bring a cassette tape recorder with me; his idea was to make a recording that would also be a gift to the students. And so on the Saturday night of Thanksgiving weekend in November of 1976, I visited Harry Smith in his disheveled room at the Chelsea Hotel. We spent hours talking and smoking pot (we bought the marijuana from a dealer in the Chelsea; Harry got me to pay for it). I remember being amazed by Harry's erudition, his scraggly beard, the intensity of his eyes inside the frames of his thick black glasses, his unforgettable voice, and what was for me at the time, his utterly unprecedented eccentricity.

In many ways Harry was intimidating, even quite frightening, but he also emanated kindness and vulnerability—the combination of which was both mesmerizing and endearing. Harry and I kept in touch for a while after that, and we even went out for lunch a few times (for which I also paid). Later, I visited him at the Breslin Hotel on Twenty-Ninth Street, where he moved after he was forced out of the Chelsea. Getting to know Harry Smith, even just a little, was one of the big thrills of my life, and I have Ken and Larry to thank for that.

I was also active in the Cinema Department on other fronts. Besides being a teaching assistant for Ken and Larry (Larry called us "docents"), I designed publicity posters for the visiting artists program, I was a projectionist for classes, and also a work-study student assigned to Bruce Holman, the technical wizard who repaired all of the camera and editing equipment for the department (and who stayed far, far away from any departmental politics or intrigue).

I was also president of the Film Co-op (we arranged to buy film stock and other supplies at a cut-rate to sell to students) and coprogrammer (with David Kasakove) of Harpur Film Society, where our